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The **P**ALIMPSEST

JULY 1943

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

THE PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

THE MEANING OF PALIMPSEST

In early times a palimpsest was a parchment or other material from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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THE PALIMPSEST

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Joseph Reynolds

"Diamond Jo" Reynolds was on the verge of financial ruin. He had entered the grain trade of the upper Mississippi Valley about 1860 and was shipping wheat, corn, and oats from Prairie du Chien to eastern markets by way of the Milwaukee & Mississippi Railroad. All at once the Minnesota Packet Company refused to transport his grain from the river terminals to Prairie du Chien, thereby subjecting him to losses by the elements or forcing him to sell on an unfavorable market. Upon investigation he found that some of his competitors owned stock in the packet company and had prevailed upon its officers to discriminate against his grain shipments. It was a crucial moment but Joseph Reynolds met it in his characteristic way. If the packet company would not carry his grain he would build his own steamboat.

In the spring of 1862, while his competitors were probably congratulating themselves on having eliminated a dangerous rival, Joseph Reynolds

commenced building the steamboat *Lansing* on the Wisconsin River near Prairie du Chien. When completed, the eighty-three-ton boat was placed under the command of Captain J. B. Wilcox and was soon enjoying a lucrative trade between Lansing, Iowa, and Prairie du Chien. The *Lansing* not only carried all of "Diamond Jo's" produce but picked up all freight not directly controlled by the Minnesota Packet Company. Fearful lest the boat should develop into a serious competitor, the packet company offered to buy it and promised no further discrimination. Since Reynolds was not primarily interested in transportation, he took the packet company at its word and sold them the *Lansing*.

A keen mind, a resourceful personality, and a competitive spirit were characteristic traits of "Diamond Jo" Reynolds. Born of Quaker ancestry in Fallsburg, New York, on June 11, 1819, he received only a common-school education. When a mere youth he started out in business for himself, buying cattle, sheep, and hogs, butchering them, and peddling them throughout the countryside from his meat wagon. This was hard work and not always profitable. Once he closed a season with just three dollars net profit. To bolster his sagging income Reynolds taught school in the winter, receiving ten dollars a month and his

board. But he soon foresaw that teaching and the meat business afforded scant profits for his energy. At the first opportunity he joined his brother Isaac in operating a general store in Rockland, New York.

Little is known of this venture, but his residence in Rockland led to his marriage with Mary E. Morton of that town. His father-in-law, who proved to be as generous as he was affluent, promptly bought young Reynolds a flour-and-feed mill which paid good dividends. When this structure burned down Reynolds built the finest mill in that region — a project which caused many neighbors to shake their heads in doubt. The new mill, however, was a great financial success, drawing business from long distances

Spurred on by the success of his mill, young Reynolds next bought a tannery and remodelled it along the latest and most efficient lines. Again he found himself in a profitable business. After a few years he received such a good offer that he sold all his Rockland interests and moved to Chicago where he established a tannery on West Water Street about 1856. Presently he was traveling throughout Wisconsin and Minnesota, buying hides and furs for his Chicago tannery.

It was while engaged in this venture that Joseph Reynolds received the nickname "Diamond Jo".

According to Captain Fred A. Bill, there was another J. Reynolds in the same business in Chicago, and their shipments frequently became mixed. Joseph Reynolds then conceived the idea of establishing a sort of trademark, and his next consignment was marked with his nickname "Jo" inclosed in a diamond. Ever after he was known as "Diamond Jo".

It was not long after "Diamond Jo" had disposed of the *Lansing* that he discovered the officers of the Minnesota Packet Company to be without honor. He promptly built a second boat, the *Diamond Jo*, and ran her in the grain trade. When the Minnesota Packet Company reorganized as the North Western Packet Company its officers once more induced Reynolds, by promises and guarantees, to sell the *Diamond Jo* and her barges. The new company honorably fulfilled its agreement for three seasons. Then, on May 1, 1866, it was reorganized into the North Western Union Packet Company with Commodore William F. Davidson as the moving spirit. Once more the company began discriminating against Reynolds and once more that indomitable captain of industry launched into the transportation business. It was an unlucky day for the North Western Union Packet Company when its officials crossed swords with "Diamond Jo" Reynolds.

This time he remained in the steamboat business, his boats successfully competing against Davidson's White Collar Line and actually outlasting that powerful corporation.

Joseph Reynolds demonstrated his resourcefulness and ability in many other fields. Most of the investments which he made were profitable, but in almost every instance they did not become so until he had contributed much capital, personal ingenuity, and perseverance. For example, during the late seventies, he and his son Blake, who was born in McGregor about 1860, turned their attention to gold mining in Arizona and Colorado. Their first venture was with the Del Pasco Mine at Congress, Arizona. It appears that the owners had allowed Reynolds and his men to work the mine for a time before paying for it, meanwhile "salting" it to lead the "tenderfeet" on. The mine paid for, Reynolds quickly found he had been hoaxed. Always a good loser, "Diamond Jo" cast about for a new venture and bought the Congress Gold Mine in the same locality. When a friend questioned the wisdom of operating another mine there, "Diamond Jo" replied: "Well, when you lose anything don't you look for it in the same locality?" The Congress Mine proved to be one of his richest investments.

During the early eighties "Diamond Jo" exhib-

ited his stubborn resourcefulness and fighting spirit in yet another venture. He had been ordered to Hot Springs, Arkansas, for a rest and was making the twenty-two-mile trip from Malvern to Hot Springs in a rickety stagecoach over an extremely rough road. Finally the stagecoach broke down and Reynolds and his companions were compelled to walk the remainder of the distance. When he reached Hot Springs he protested vehemently. "Your old stage is a disgrace to the country", Reynolds told the proprietor.

"Ef yer don't like this ere kerrage, w'at yer goin' to do about it?" was the sarcastic reply.

"I'll build a railroad", retorted "Diamond Jo".

And build a railroad he did! Engineers were secured and the whole matter studied from the standpoint of ultimate success, for Reynolds was not a thoughtless plunger. Within a few months he had completed a narrow-gauge railroad from Malvern to Hot Springs, putting the stage line out of business. As traffic increased he used the profits to convert the line to a standard-gauge track. It was not long before the popularity of the Arkansas health resort made the Hot Springs railroad one of the best-paying twenty-two miles in the country.

Illustrative of the confidence which other businessmen reposed in "Diamond Jo" is the follow-

ing story which was told by Philip D. Armour to Captain John Killeen of Dubuque. It appears that times were hard, a flurry in the money market having caused a shortage in cash for enterprises. One day Reynolds entered Armour's office and the latter, anticipating his request, promptly said: "Jo, can you lend me \$50,000?"

"That is just what I came to you for", Reynolds replied. "I never wanted money so badly in all my life."

"How much do you want?" Armour inquired.

"I want \$200,000", Reynolds replied.

"I can let you have it", said Armour, and filled out checks for that amount, taking Reynolds's personal notes in exchange.

Soon afterward Reynolds returned with a bundle of stock (the entire value of the Hot Springs Railroad) and threw them on Armour's desk, saying: "Phil, keep that until I pay back the money."

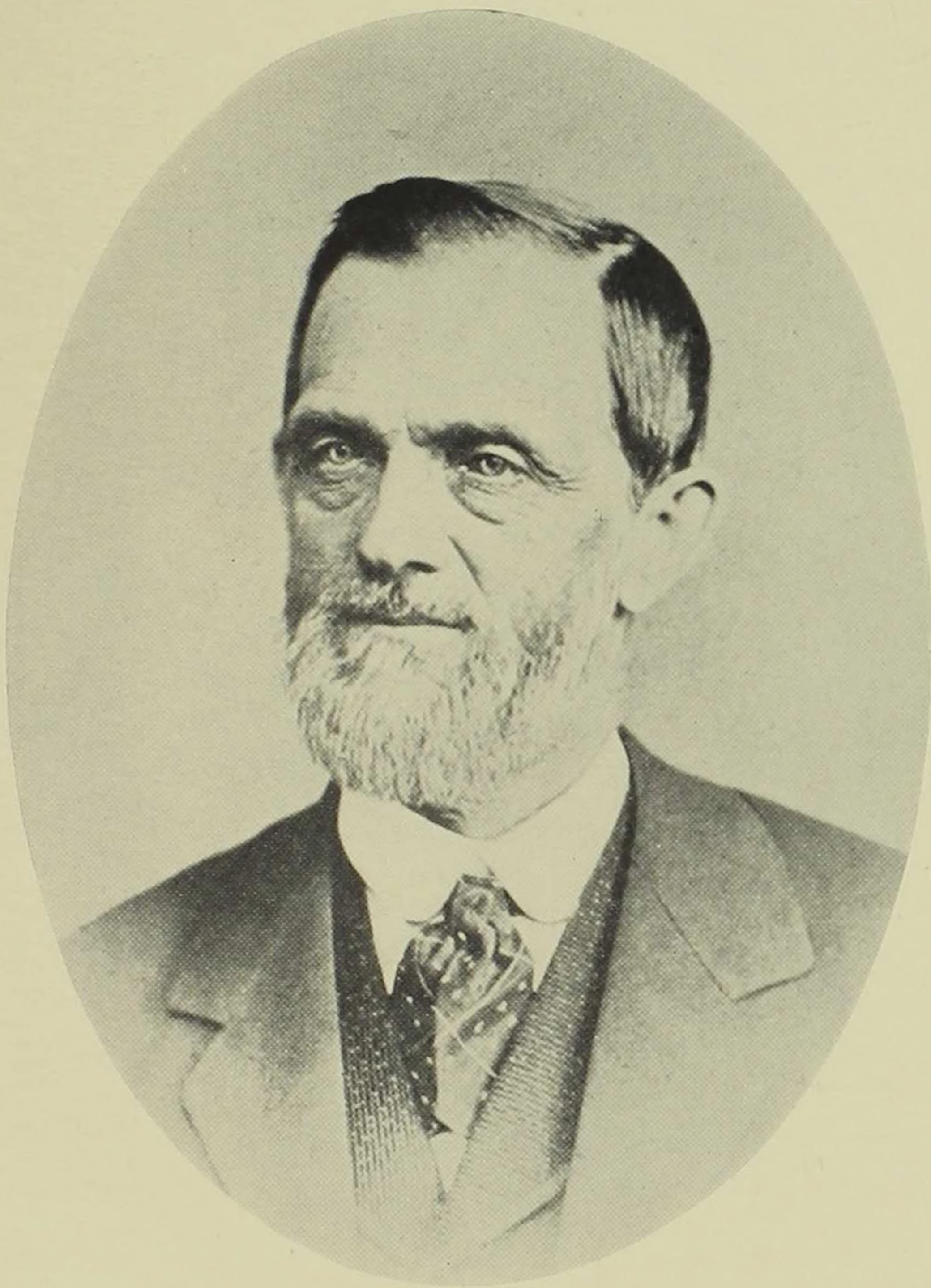
"Put that back in your safety box, Jo", Armour replied. "But for the uncertainty of life your word would be enough for me. Were it not for that I would not accept your notes."

Despite his wealth and standing, "Diamond Jo" remained a man of simple tastes and appearance. Something of a carpenter and mechanic he could often be found aboard one of his boats mak-

ing repairs and tinkering with odd jobs. One day an aristocratic old Southerner was making a trip on a Diamond Jo boat. Going below he found an old man who apparently was the boat's carpenter hard at work. He engaged him in conversation, and spent a very interesting hour on the lower deck. On returning to the upper deck the Southerner told the captain he had just had a pleasant chat with the carpenter and found him a rather intelligent old fellow. "Yes," said the captain, "he is somewhat intelligent. His name is Reynolds, commonly known as 'Diamond Jo'. He owns this line of steamboats, a railroad in Arkansas, numerous gold mines in Colorado and Arizona, and is probably worth two or three million dollars."

In his later years fantastic tales were told about Joseph Reynolds. His wealth was variously estimated at from one to twenty million dollars. "They tell a heap of things about me that never happened", Reynolds once told a reporter who asked if it was true that he was named "Diamond Jo" because he had lost a very valuable stone in London.

"Never was in London in my life; and never crossed the Atlantic", he confided to his visitor. "I never lost anything, except, some years ago, a fellow on the back end of a St. Louis street car



JOSEPH REYNOLDS

borrowed my purse and \$400 out of my breeches pocket, and he never brought it back. They used to say that I swore like a trooper, dressed like a dandy, gambled, smoked, chewed tobacco, and drank whisky by the quart. I do none of these things, except once in a while I might go off to myself and very carefully say '—— it,' but I don't know how to gamble. I never smoked or chewed. I haven't taken a drink of beer or whisky in twenty-five years. I wish people would let me alone. If you ever write anything about me nine-tenths of it won't be true, and the other tenth won't be worth reading."

Big-hearted, matter-of-fact, unassuming, he also earned the respect of humble folks. Once he gave up his own stateroom to a lady with a baby. On another occasion, instead of bringing charges against a man who had tried to defraud him, he gave his family financial aid. Although not a vindictive man, Reynolds would nevertheless refuse to continue to employ anyone who had been dishonest with him. But with his own faithful employees he was generous beyond measure. In his lifetime he amply rewarded the services of such men as John Killeen, Fred A. Bill, and E. M. Dickey to whom he entrusted heavy responsibilities.

Always a powerful, driving force, always en-

gaged in varied interests, Joseph Reynolds remained in the harness to the very end. In December of 1890 he contracted pneumonia and subsequently sojourned at healthful Hot Springs. In the following February he was again stricken while visiting his Arizona gold mine. He died in a rude shack at the mouth of the Congress Mine, from which he had taken much of his wealth. Far removed from medical or legal care, "Diamond Jo" apparently realized his end was near and insisted on dictating a will in the presence of his mine superintendent and half a dozen other miners. Seven or eight of his employees were beneficiaries to the amount of fifty thousand dollars. "Diamond Jo" died on February 21, 1891, thirty hours before the men sent out to secure medical help at Prescott arrived in that frontier town. He was buried in Mount Hope Cemetery in Chicago, Illinois.

In life and in death Joseph Reynolds left imperishable vignettes in the hearts and minds of those he met. For a score of years after his passing the colorful fleet of the Diamond Jo Line reminded Iowans of the industry and imagination that had brought this nationally famous line into existence.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

The Diamond Jo Line

You ought to see dat stovepipe brown of mine
Lak he owns de Dimon' Joseph line.

So sang W. C. Handy in his whimsical "St. Louis Blues" which appeared in 1914, three years after the famous Diamond Jo Line went out of existence. That brief period, however, had not erased from the memories of men the exploits of a line of steamboats that had plied the upper Mississippi for almost a half century prior to its sale to the Streckfus Company in 1911. In song and in story, in photography, etching, and painting, in the economic and social life of the people, the Diamond Jo Line has left an imperishable record. For sheer color and far-flung popularity no other activity of "Diamond Jo" Reynolds matched the picturesque steamboats that bore his aegis to the thriving river ports of Iowa.

The Diamond Jo steamboat company was formed primarily for the grain towing trade. Freight and passenger service was originally only a secondary consideration. As the grain trade began to decline, however, the Diamond Jo boats engaged more and more in the passenger and general freight traffic. The excursion trade,

though incidental, was lucrative, especially in the later years.

First in the long list of craft that bore the Diamond Jo ensign was the *Lansing*, an eighty-three-ton stern-wheeler. Although serving Reynolds but a short time in the grain trade between Lansing and Prairie du Chien before being purchased by the Minnesota Packet Company, the *Lansing* was long associated with the Iowa scene. On May 13, 1867, she exploded a forward boiler while endeavoring to back away from the levee at Hampton, Illinois. Six persons, including the pilot, were killed, and a number of others were seriously injured. The *Lansing* was rebuilt into a 123-ton craft at Dubuque and was used as a ferryboat at Clinton until 1874 when she was sold south.

The second towboat constructed by Joseph Reynolds was the *Diamond Jo*, a vessel built in 1864 and destined to see sixteen years of service on the upper Mississippi before being dismantled and her machinery placed in the *Josephine*. Like the *Lansing*, the *Diamond Jo* was sold to a competitor, but repurchased in 1868.

When Joseph Reynolds in 1867 entered the steamboat business in earnest, he began with the sixty-one-ton screw propeller *John C. Gault*. In the following year (1868) he made arrangements with the Chicago & North Western Railway to

carry grain to their terminal at Fulton, Illinois, opposite Clinton, using the *John C. Gault*, the *Ida Fulton*, the *Bannock City*, the *Diamond Jo*, and the *Lady Pike* to form the Chicago, Fulton, and River Line. The significance of this alignment was not overlooked by river editors. On May 3, 1868, the *Dubuque Herald* declared: "The steamer *J. C. Gault* of the Diamond Jo line, arrived at noon yesterday with a tow of five barges very heavily loaded. Her manifest shows nearly 45,000 bushels of wheat and oats, also a few hundred sacks of wheat. All for Chicago via Fulton!" This was said to be the largest tow of the season.

By 1869 Joseph Reynolds was playing the leading rôle in the grain trade and his steamers were already popularly called the Diamond Jo Line. The *Ida Fulton* passed Dubuque early in May with 1700 barrels of flour, 1880 sacks of grain, and 16,000 bushels of bulk grain, together with other "plunder". The *Bannock City* passed down in October with 55,000 bushels and 3000 sacks of grain, in addition to flour and other freight.

Although the downstream trade was dominant, the upstream trade was very heavy. In June the *Bannock City* churned north with four heavily loaded barges. She put off 140 barrels of salt and about 300 packages at Dubuque alone. In that same month the *Dubuque Herald* declared:

"Business on the levee was modestly active until the *Diamond Jo* arrived, when the clerks were crowded with work. Conway & Linehan were flying around like bees copying manifests and receipting for goods." The *Diamond Jo* had two grain barges in tow and reshipped about 1000 packages, including 70 barrels of salt, 125 bundles of paper, 21 pieces of marble, 111 packages of roofing, and 42 boxes of hardware. Wandering down to the levee on a pleasant September day a Dubuque editor found no *Diamond Jo* boats in port to "make things lively". A month later, however, it was necessary to charter the *Sterling* to help the five *Diamond Jo* boats.

As the grain trade expanded Reynolds added larger boats like the *Arkansas*, the *Tidal Wave*, the *Imperial*, and the *Jeanette Roberts* to his line. During June of 1873 the *Diamond Jo* boats delivered 600,000 bushels of wheat at the Fulton elevator. In the fall of that year, however, the *Fulton Journal* announced that the *Diamond Jo* offices and shipyards would be removed from Fulton in the spring because the North Western railroad had completed a track to a point on the upper Mississippi in Wisconsin and the longer boat haul was no longer necessary. Reynolds then chose Dubuque as headquarters for his company and established his boatyard at Eagle Point.

The popularity of the Diamond Jo Line may be gleaned from a study of the bills of lading issued by various grain shippers on the upper Mississippi. Between 1877 and 1880, Hermann Ihm, dealer in grain, produce, and general merchandise, and proprietor of the Guttenberg elevator, used seven boats of the Diamond Jo Line for every boat belonging to other companies. Although the North Western Union Packet Company eliminated all other upper Mississippi competitors it met an unbeatable adversary in "Diamond Jo" Reynolds, whose boats not only attained preëminence in the grain trade but actually overcame the White Collar Line in the packet trade as well.

Steamboating was on the decline before Reynolds moved his main office to Dubuque in 1874. Grain continued to be the main cargo, but fewer boats and smaller shipments were already the rule. To the natural limitations of waterways transportation — the limited season of navigation, high and low water, and the failure to improve the river — steamboats had to contend with a ruthless and unrestricted railroad competition. These, and other factors, combined to take the profits out of steamboating. In a letter on May 20, 1890, Joseph Reynolds assured Superintendent John Killeen that adverse conditions rather than the superintendent's efforts were responsible for the

boats not making money. This document disproves the statement of several authorities who claimed that the Diamond Jo Line prospered as long as Joseph Reynolds lived.

Steamboat transportation of grain had virtually ceased by 1890. Fortunately, "Diamond Jo" Reynolds had foreseen this decline. The company had turned its attention to the passenger traffic as early as 1879 when the *Libbie Conger* made several trips between St. Louis and St. Paul. In 1880, the *Mary Morton*, a 450-ton stern-wheeler and the finest boat in the line up to that time, began regular passenger service between St. Louis and St. Paul. Thereafter Diamond Jo boats afforded some of the finest packet service ever offered on the upper Mississippi.

In 1892 a Burlington newspaper urged its readers to travel to the "Golden Summer Resorts of the Northwest" aboard one of the reliable, light-draft Diamond Jo boats equipped with modern improvements and commanded by able and experienced officers. Fifteen years later Charles L. Petersen, Diamond Jo agent at Dubuque, advertised the "largest and finest vessels on the Mississippi" for a vacation trip. "The scenery is magnificent", Agent Petersen declared, "and with good meals and good music, it is an ideal outing."

The steamboat *Dubuque* was particularly popu-

lar with honeymooners of yesteryears. The Muscatine *Journal* of July 3, 1907, noted five bridal couples on that boat on its previous trip upstream. It was reported that one negro porter aboard the *Dubuque* was "kept busy nearly all the time clearing the decks of the rice which is showered upon the couples by their friends."

During the years 1897 to 1910 the dominance of the passenger traffic is attested by yearly boat receipts for the *Dubuque*, the *Sidney*, the *Quincy*, and the *St. Paul*. A sampling of twenty-six individual reports for these boats shows that \$385,008.37 was received from freight and \$659,798.96 from meals, berths, and passages. In eight seasons the *Dubuque* averaged \$21,375.65 from freight and \$26,302.13 from passengers. It was these four boats that were acquired by the Streckfus Line in the spring of 1911, together with the wharfboats and other equipment of the Diamond Jo Line. Gradually the new owners converted these boats into excursion craft, and the first three of the above mentioned vessels were renamed the *Capitol*, the *Washington*, and the *J. S.* And so they will probably be remembered by the present generation of Iowans, though some of these old boats had left their smoke trails on the upper Mississippi in the heyday of the grain trade.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

Good Times on the Diamond Jo

Steamboat excursions on the upper Mississippi were among the most popular of Iowa pastimes. Scores of handsome packets were pressed into service to meet the demands of all kinds of organizations for all-day outings on the Father of Waters. Although a hundred different steamboats plied the eastern border of Iowa during the 1850's, they were unable to satisfy the passenger demand. After the Civil War, raftboats, towboats, and even ferryboats were called upon to transport excursion parties. These trips were enjoyed by excursionists from inland communities as well as river towns. So great was the demand and so large the crowds that special excursion barges were constructed for the smaller craft to insure a place for all.

Newspaper editors were frequently instigators as well as recorders of river excursions. "This warm weather will remind people", the *Clinton Iowa Age* declared on June 4, 1869, "that about these days pic-nics in the groves and excursions on the river are exactly in order." Within the month fully a dozen excursions were run out of Clinton. The "teachers and scholars" of the Con-

gregational Sabbath School steamed to Sabula, Bellevue, and Savanna on June 19th. Eleven days later the Presbyterians chartered the steamboat *Diamond Jo* with her fine band for an excursion to Rock Island. Four hundred Clintonians made the trip. This same craft, under the command of "Diamond Jo" Reynolds himself, took over four hundred Baptists and their friends from Clinton to Rock Island on July 3rd, where they mingled with a happy group of Methodists who had arrived from Muscatine aboard the *City of Keithsburg*. The total receipts for this trip were \$976.37 and the Baptists made a net profit of \$600.94.

Such excursions were popular because they were inexpensive, could be run on week-ends and holidays, and were usually for some worthy cause. Equally popular although far more expensive was an excursion to St. Paul and the Falls of St. Anthony which George Catlin had denominated the "Fashionable Tour" as early as 1837. To this Mecca for honeymooner and vacationist the Rock Island Railroad had run its "Grand Excursion" of 1854 to celebrate the arrival of the first iron-horse on the banks of the Mississippi. Thousands of Iowans can still recall the pleasures of such a trip aboard one of the packets of the Diamond Jo Line in the first decade of the twentieth

eth century. A smaller number can recall earlier trips aboard the Diamond Jo boats. It is doubtful if many can remember the excursion which Clinton citizens made in 1869 aboard the steamboat *Diamond Jo*. This was probably the first such excursion made by a Diamond Jo boat. Since Joseph Reynolds himself commanded his namesake on this trip, and since he served a relatively short time as steamboat captain, the story of this voyage is well worth recording.

Few excursions to the Falls of St. Anthony have received more publicity than that of the *Diamond Jo* in 1869. Perhaps this was due to the fact that E. H. Thayer, editor of the *Clinton Iowa Age* was one of the prime instigators of the trip. At the time of the excursion a fellow editor, M. A. Fuller, of the *Chicago Republican* was visiting Thayer, and it is possible that he expressed a desire to make such a trip. At any rate on July 2nd it was announced that Captain Joseph Reynolds would charter the *Diamond Jo* for such an excursion at \$25 per couple if fifty couples would participate. Since room, meals, and transportation were included in this seven-day voyage it is difficult to see how "Diamond Jo" expected to make any money on it.

The *Diamond Jo* was scarcely the boat to charter for so large a crowd. Built at Prairie du

Chien in 1864 for grain transport, she was 165 feet long, thirty-two feet of beam, had a depth of four feet three inches, and measured 242 tons. Designed as a towboat, the *Diamond Jo* usually pushed several grain barges, and was notoriously slow and hard to handle. Moreover, she possessed only nineteen state rooms with two berths each and was therefore capable of providing suitable accommodations for only thirty-eight passengers. Her United States Steamboat Inspectors Certificate, dated July 10, 1865, shows she had additional berths for fifty deck or other passengers. Hence, the *Diamond Jo* was not equipped to carry fifty couples. But the lack of comfortable accommodations along with other drawbacks did not deter the legal limit of eighty-eight Clintonites such as the Lambs, the Youngs, and the Seamans, from making the trip, largely through the efforts of Horace Baker and H. B. Sutherland.

The party began boarding the *Diamond Jo* on the evening of July 5th. At nine o'clock "amid the cheers of the crowd on shore, properly responded to by the excursionists on board" the *Diamond Jo* "cut her cable" and turned her bow upstream, making fair time to Fulton. Here the excursionists noted with apprehension that the *Diamond Jo* picked up two grain barges.

Most of the party paid little attention to the

progress of the *Diamond Jo* that first evening. "The boat fairly off," E. H. Thayer wrote to his paper from Dubuque, "the tables in the cabin were piled up, the music summoned, and the dance commenced. But not to continue long. The ladies could hardly bear the idea of allowing such hours and such opportunities for dancing to pass without being improved — but the fact is, they were too wearied with the day's toil in preparing for the trip, to enter into the dance with spirit — and consequently we must chronicle the statement that the first attempt of this excursion party to dance on the *Diamond Jo* was a failure." Nobody felt like retiring at midnight, however, and the party accordingly gathered in small groups, making new acquaintances, and planning for the morrow's fun.

It was not until two o'clock that the excursionists repaired to their staterooms. It was then that they received their first blow. According to Thayer there were "either too many people on board or too few state-rooms and berths." Of course the ladies had to be provided for, and so several gentlemen gave up their berths and slept on thin mattresses on the cabin floor. "O, how my bones ache", wailed the promoter of the trip, who reclined on the same mattress with B. S. De Forrest and L. W. Buck. The latter tried to sleep and dream of St. Paul and the nice time in store

for the "happy" excursionists, an effort that met with indifferent success.

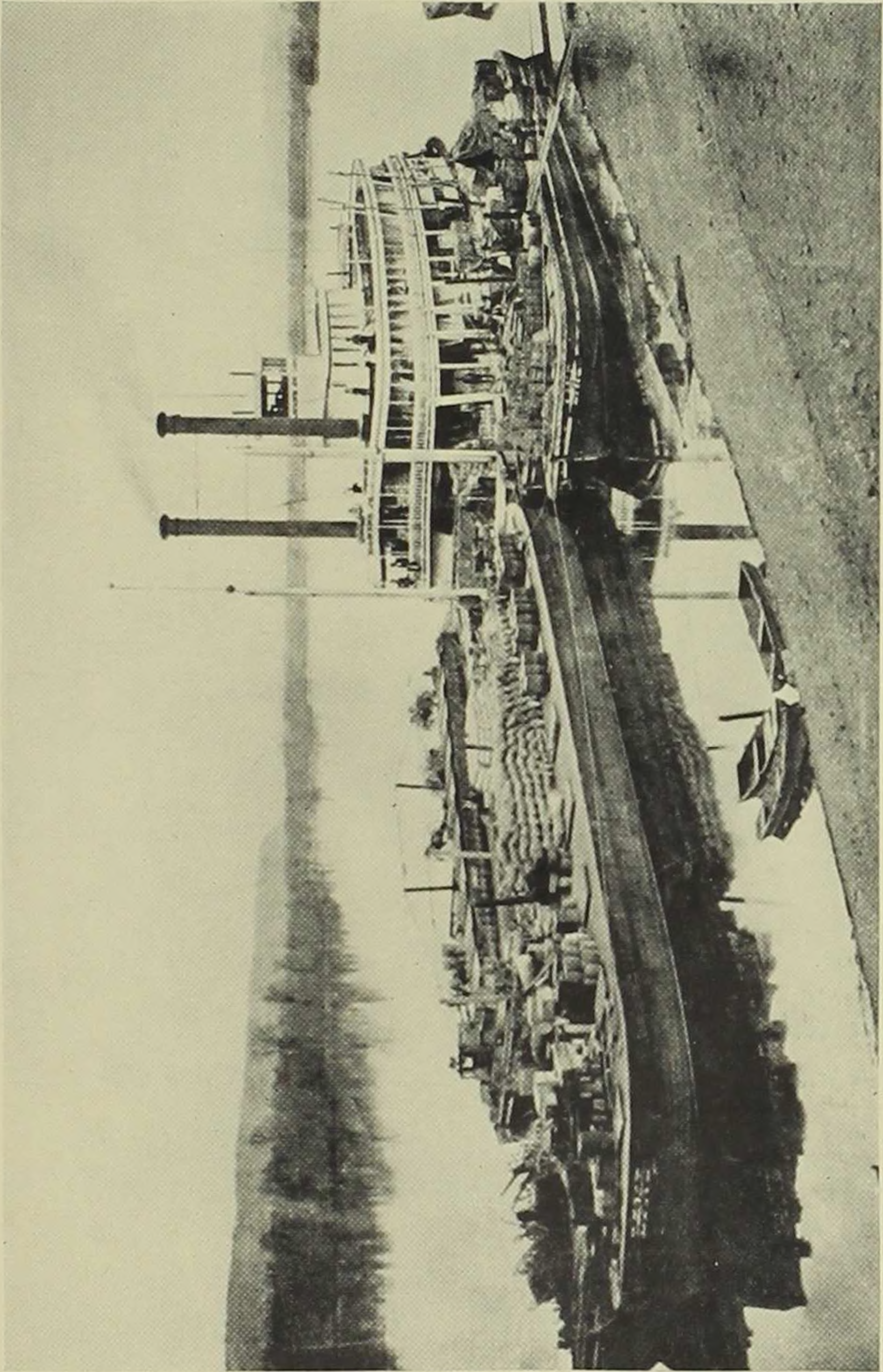
After a couple hours of tortured sleep the "floor lodgers" were routed out by a "cross-grained" and "crabbed" steward at 4:30 A. M. in order to prepare the cabin for breakfast. When the sleepy men learned that the *Diamond Jo* was still eight miles below Bellevue there were "mutterings" and sounds of "mutiny", with threats to return to Clinton on the first boat. Ever "polite and gentlemanly" Captain Reynolds assuaged the excursionists. "When we get to Dubuque", he declared, "we will lay in the articles we need — we will have some cots, quilts, pillows, two or three more cooks, ice, and a few drinkables, &c., and we will yet make the trip pleasant and agreeable." All breathed easier at this promise for everyone knew that "Diamond Jo" was as good as his word. A tasty breakfast improved the general tone of the Clintonians and it was generally felt that the captain, clerk, and other officers would soon whip the *Diamond Jo* into shape and take care of the overflow crowd.

The excursionists disembarked at Dubuque shortly after dinner. Some rode in the street cars, many crowded the walks, all expressed themselves well-pleased with Dubuque, especially the bakeries and confectionaries. "From Dubuque the

improvements promised by the Captain were carried out to the letter", E. H. Thayer recorded. "The first supper on board was excellent in every respect, and general good nature brightened up all countenances."

A pleasant feature of any river trip is the constantly changing panorama. After tea the excursionists assembled outside the cabin to admire the beautiful and majestic scenery along the Iowa shore. Who would not agree with the following! "There is a good deal of sameness about the Mississippi river scenery, but it is a sameness of which the eye never tires, because the scenery is gotten up on such a gorgeous and extensive plan, that the more a person looks the more he becomes infatuated and the more anxious he is to see all and miss nothing. . . . From the second evening of our trip to the Sabbath following, we saw rock-ribbed hills and mountains, beautiful vales, and such other gorgeous river scenery as no other stream on the face of the earth can boast."

Another feature of any Mississippi voyage is the relative slowness with which many craft churn upstream. Even in 1869 the excursionists were appalled at the snail-like movement of the *Diamond Jo*, for many doubtless had traveled aboard such sleek racehorses as the *Phil Sheridan*, the *Sucker State*, and the *Hawkeye State*, steamboats



FROM THE COLLECTION OF WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

THE *DIAMOND JO* WITH A FOUR-BARGE TOW IN 1875

whose speed was proverbial. "Wednesday morning found us plodding along, as only a stern wheel boat with two loaded barges, can plod. It was like going to a funeral by steam. True there was hilarity and fun on board. Dancing occasionally — music on the piano, singing of popular songs with chorus by the company, a little euchre, more whist and a good deal of 'seven up' — but the confounded boat moved so slow that we all thought it was more becoming on such an occasion to be demure and solemn, so that it looked as though the fun part was made simply from custom. At wood landings the company would go ashore and hunt up little amusements such as climbing the bluffs, milking the cows, (of course paying for the milk), buying nic-nacs at the solitary store, filling pitchers with nice spring water, gathering specimens from the rocky beach, promenading up and down the shore, skipping smooth rocks upon the river, &c."

At two o'clock on Wednesday afternoon the *Diamond Jo* finally crawled up to the Lansing levee, having made 164 miles in forty-one hours, or approximately four miles an hour. This was about the same time the *Phil Sheridan* required to run from St. Louis to Dubuque, a distance of 425 miles. Mournfully Editor Thayer recorded: "No wonder Frank Woodworth expresses the hope

that we will reach St. Paul before the river freezes over, especially if he is as poor a skater as he says he is; though he must be terribly slow on the skate if he couldn't beat the *Diamond Jo's* time thus far."

Leaving Lansing behind, the excursionists were soon passing along the southeastern border of Minnesota. Here the redman could still be seen, although the ladies of the party apparently did not admire these "sons of the forests" because they were not "clad with that extravagance which civilization might require." The stronger sex was not averse to such apparel, however, and H. B. Sutherland even relieved himself of a "splendid dissertation" on the subject of "legs" suggested by the "well formed proportions of a red daughter of the forest."

Steamboat excursionists are likely to cut grotesque capers when away from home. The Clintonites reserved their most ludicrous performance for Brownsville, the first Minnesota town above the northern boundary of Iowa. After visiting a celebrated cave a few voyageurs returned to the *Diamond Jo* with a suspicious looking keg. Others bought out a music store and formed a "Gideons Band" with which to entertain the citizens of Brownsville. H. B. Sutherland served as grand trumpeter, J. E. Voneiff as jewsharper, William

Young as drummer, Frank Woodworth as blower general, Lafayette Lamb as second trumpeter, C. H. Leadbetter as third trumpeter, S. Thomas as fifer, and a regiment of supernumeraries with tin horns, tin trumpets, tin pans, and similar instruments. "The concert which followed eclipsed all like entertainments ever heard or conceived of", according to the *Iowa Age*. "It was unanimously voted that *one* such exhibition was as much as the excursionists were entitled to, and the thing was not repeated."

The Clintonians tarried but a moment at La-Crosse and Winona. As they approached Lake Pepin the gigantic bluffs called forth the "loudest exclamations of wonder" from the entire company. Lake City was described as a "perfect beauty" of a town. After hearing the romantic tale of Maiden Rock the excursionists concluded that parents should not interfere with their daughters' choice of lovers. While the *Diamond Jo* was leaving its second barge at Red Wing to be loaded with grain, the passengers searched for "cornelians, agates, and precious stones". The remainder of the trip was made with dispatch, the *Diamond Jo* nosing into the St. Paul wharf on Friday, June 9th, at 6 A. M.

The excursionists were not slow to plan their tour of the twin cities. In "elegant rigs" they

drove to St. Anthony and "took a peep at the saw mills, flour mills, woolen mills and machine shops, took a hurried look at the dams, canals, aprons, sluices, tunnels, and shafts of the water power, imbibed a few glasses of mineral water, went down some rickety stairs into a cave . . . admired the beautiful Falls of St. Anthony . . . then crossed the river on the suspension bridge into Minneapolis". After driving through the Minneapolis residential district — "the most attractive city we have seen in the west — if we except Clinton", the party visited the "stupendous" lumber mills, wheat elevators, public buildings, and water works. They reached the Nicollet Hotel in time for a "square meal" and a noon rest.

After dinner the party started for Minnehaha Falls and old Fort Snelling. According to Thayer, the "world-renowned Minnehaha" was a "nice, modest, pretty, beautiful, magnificent cascade. The more you look, the more you admire it. It is like gazing upon a beautiful woman — you look and admire, and admire and look. . . . Laughing, sparkling, bright and shining — Minnehaha is the grand and gay princess of all waterfalls. You love her at first sight!"

After buying postcards of Minnehaha and indulging in ice cream the party whirled away to Fort Snelling, which overlooked the Mississippi

at the junction of that stream with the Minnesota River. Gathering storm clouds cut short their visit to a great cave nearby and the excursionists hurried back to St. Paul which they reached at six o'clock. Although fatigued from their sightseeing, all were "wonderfully well pleased" with their tour. Many prophesied a great future for St. Paul; some were even heard to exclaim, "were we not a Clintonian we would be a St. Paulian."

That night a tired but happy group of excursionists returned to the *Diamond Jo*. Forgotten was the dance which some had proposed that morning. All on board quickly "piled" themselves away for sleep at an early hour and at two o'clock on Saturday morning the *Diamond Jo* was bound downstream for Clinton.

The return trip was made in record time for the *Diamond Jo*, unhampered as she was by barges and with little freight aboard. The boat went booming through Lake Pepin while a gale whipped up white caps. She paused a moment at Lake City, danced gaily past Reads Landing, and put in at Winona for a couple of hours. The only accident occurred when she unslipped a rudder while approaching LaCrosse but this was quickly repaired. The best dance of the trip was held on Saturday night. A solemn religious service was conducted in the cabin on Sunday morning with

A. P. Hosford reading one of Dr. Alexander's excellent sermons and E. W. Goodale concluding with prayer. The *Diamond Jo* stopped at McGregor twenty minutes for noon refreshments. On Sunday evening the lights of Dubuque blinked their welcome and once more a short stop was made. Then off they sped on the final leg of the journey, with all retiring at an early hour. At four o'clock on Monday morning the *Diamond Jo* glided up to Butcher's landing at Clinton, having made the round-trip in exactly six days and seven hours, including the numerous stops.

The voyage of the *Diamond Jo* was typical of hundreds along the eastern border of Iowa. The Clinton excursionists were not inclined to praise the *Diamond Jo* as the best craft for such a trip because they felt Captain Reynolds had crowded on too many passengers for the comfort of all aboard. The boat was unable to feed so large a number satisfactorily, a first and second table being needed and this produced considerable complaint among those who partook of the remains at the second table. The passengers had nothing but venom for the "cross-grained, snappish, snarling old colored curmudgeon" who served as steward, but praised the efforts of "Diamond Jo" and the other officers who tried to make them comfortable in their cramped quarters.

It was customary for excursionists to adopt resolutions thanking the captain and his officers for their many kindnesses. A meeting was called in the cabin of the *Diamond Jo* on July 10th with J. Scofield presiding and J. F. McGuire as secretary. Judge E. H. Thayer, editor of the *Iowa Age*, served as chairman of the resolutions committee with A. P. Hosford and C. H. Leadbetter. Copies of the resolutions were presented to Captain Joseph Reynolds, to the committee which had labored industriously to arrange the excursion, and to the Clinton newspapers. "Resolved, That we unanimously tender to Captain Reynolds and the other officers of said steamboat *Diamond Jo*, our hearty and cordial thanks for the kind, gentlemanly and courteous treatment extended to us on the trip from Clinton, Iowa, to St. Paul, Minnesota, and return; that we shall always refer with pleasant recollections to the uniform kindness we have received from said captain and officers, and that we take pleasure in recommending to the traveling public who patronize steamboats on the Mississippi, either for business or pleasure, the staunch and commodious steamer *Diamond Jo*." The able skipper of the *Diamond Jo* responded to these sentiments in a "brief, neat and pointed speech."

M. A. Fuller of the *Chicago Republican* was

then called upon for a few remarks, after which, at the request of the party, he read an original poem written during the voyage. Despite his kindly sentiments, Editor Thayer felt constrained to write: "Our advice to excursion parties to St. Paul, is, to have the company fall below the number the boat can accommodate. Avoid the necessity of a second table, as you would avoid the plague. Be sure and take two days at St. Paul. Don't go on a boat that takes along two loaded barges. If you have a saucy, ugly steward, kick him overboard the first day. And then if you expect to have everything just as you want it, our advice is — don't go." He might have added, don't expect to take a week's all-expense cruise for the price of twenty-five dollars per couple. Apparently "Diamond Jo" Reynolds himself learned a lesson, for it was years before his boats attempted a similar excursion, and then they were larger and properly equipped.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

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